

Silencing adult classes

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[By Julie R. Johnson/Tri-County Newspapers](#)

Simply going to the store and buying groceries can be difficult for Stella Mendoza. The same can be said for going to the doctor's office or work.

Mendoza's native language is Spanish, and like many of her fellow students, she is very distraught that her English language classes may be coming to an end.

She is a student at Corning Adult Education which receives the majority of its funding from the Corning Union High School District.

"I am worried about the termination of the adult education," Mendoza said. "As a student I've taken English classes for about 1 1/2 years. My English is better thanks to this program."

In February, the district board of trustees made the decision to suspend the Adult Education program due to state budget cuts.

District Superintendent Bruce Cole said as this juncture the district has got to focus on its core foundation which is to provide comprehensive and alternative education for ninth- through 12th-grade students.

"We have to sustain that mission," he said.

Suspension of the district's Adult Education and Childcare Facility will save the district \$180,000 in general budget funds.

Spanish-speaking students of the Adult Education English Language class have been lobbying to see the classes continue.

Rafael Pahua said the classes have been so important to him that he would be willing to pay an enrollment fee is necessary.

English language teacher Dan Drum feels it will be a great loss to the community to lose the Adult Education program.

"We have seen such improvement in the lives of many of our students because of the program. I understand the problem with the lack of funding, but I just have to believe there is another way to raise the money necessary for these classes," he said.

According to Ann Ratay, Adult Education program director, not only does the program provide English language classes, but citizenship classes, GED

preparation classes, and others subjects that help adults earn a high school diploma.

Leticia Carrillo wrote that she lives with her little sister and hopes to improve her English soon, "to be able to get a job and then go to the college and study photography."

Student Oscar Cueva said the Hispanic community that does not speak and understand English really desires to learn.

"The classes at night are of great value to our community, it is a way of self-improvement," Teresa Valerio wrote.

Some of the students wrote about their desire to vote during elections and becoming more involved in community activities, but only being able to fulfill those desires if they learn to speak, read and write English.

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